



April 10, 2015

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Substantial 90-day Finding on a Petition to List the Yellow-Cedar as Threatened or Endangered Under the Endangered Species Act

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Scientific and Commercial Information for Review

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces a 90-day finding on a petition to list yellow-cedar (*Cupressus nootkatensis*) as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Based on its review, the Service finds that the petition, dated June 24, 2014, presents substantial information indicating that listing this species as threatened or endangered may be warranted.

Yellow-cedar is a slow-growing tree found in Prince William Sound in Southcentral Alaska, south along the coast of Alaska, through coastal British Columbia, and into the coastal mountains of Washington, Oregon, and northern California. The tree is culturally significant to Alaska Native Peoples who use it to make totems, paddles, masks, dishes, and woven items. The wood is also commercially valuable.

The primary threat to the species, as described in the petition, is freezing of shallow root systems due to lack of insulating snow cover in late winter, predominantly in southeast Alaska and coastal British Columbia. This is currently understood to be caused by lack of snow cover during late winter, triggering early de-hardening of the trees and their root systems, followed by hard freezes when there is no insulating layer of snow. This is believed to be a result of climate change, with spring freezing events occurring when trees are more vulnerable. The petition also cites commercial overharvest and the inability for yellow-cedar to colonize suitable habitat fast enough as additional threats to the species survival.

The Service is seeking scientific and commercial data and other information on the status of and threats facing the yellow-cedar throughout all of its range through a 60-day public information period. You can view the notice announcing the 90-day finding and submit information by visiting www.regulations.gov, search for docket number FWS-R7-ES-2015-0025.

For more information on the Endangered Species Act's petition process, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/listing-petition-process.html>.

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